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BDSM MYTHS

5 Major Myths About BDSM

It's not all about red rooms and handsome millionaires.

PUBLISHED: AUGUST 14, 2014 | BY KRISTEN SOLLEE

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Handcuffs, blindfolds and Christian Grey might come to mind when you think of BDSM, but the real life kink community is actually far more diverse and dynamic than fiction. Although E.L. James' hugely successful series has inspired some couples to move beyond vanilla in the bedroom ([and buy more sex toys](#)), there are still a lot of myths and misconceptions out there about bondage, domination, submission and masochism. So we asked a few experts to help us bust commonly held stereotypes about BDSM:

Myth #1: *Fifty Shades of Grey* was Totally the Real Deal

Not even close, says veteran member of the BDSM community and sex therapist [Gloria Brame](#), Ph.D., author of *Different Loving*. In fact, she says most BDSM endorsers aren't really fans of the book. One problem she notes is that the book shows the main character practically pressured into trying it in the beginning, and that Christian is controlling in other aspects

of their relationship. According to Brame, the true BDSM community is all about consensual play, and the book presents a blurrier picture that, while hot, isn't exactly like the real thing.

Myth #2: You're Either Vanilla or Kinky in Bed

Completely wrong, says Brame. "Everybody finds their own level of involvement." There are plenty of people in the BDSM community only interested in spanking or dressing in S&M clothing and none of the other sexual practices. Or maybe you're turned on by the idea of getting tied up, but all that leather just seems a little silly to you. Your desires may lay somewhere on the BDSM scale, and that's perfectly fine—it's not an all-or-nothing thing. "The question is balancing your own morality with your sexuality so you find the right combination for you," explains Brame.

MORE: [Watch the First Official Trailer for *Fifty Shades of Grey*](#)

Myth #3: BDSM is a Fetish

Not exactly. Contrary to what pop culture might have you think, BDSM is not specifically a sexual fetish. "It's erotic behavior, or [kink](#)," says Los Angeles sex therapist [Christine Milrod](#), PhD. "BDSM is what a lot of people mistake for a fetish because items and objects that are used in BDSM can be fetishized." But Milrod explains that a fetish is actually defined as sexual excitement and gratification from a specific thing in lieu of intercourse. '[Bad girl sex](#)', on the other hand, is more kink than fetish.

Myth #4: Men are Dominant, Women are Submissive

"Women are just as likely as men to enjoy being in charge and in control," says Brame. Women can be dominant and men can be submissive or vice versa—and you don't have to choose just one role either.

MORE: [11 Wild, Crazy, WTF Sex Positions You've Never Heard Of—and Need to Try](#)

Myth #5: BDSM is Dangerous

Not when done correctly. Conversations about consent and safety are the norm in the BDSM community, not the exception, says Brame. In fact, that's something that you can't necessarily say for vanilla sex, which doesn't always begin by outlining boundaries. "The [single most unsafe sex](#) is not BDSM but unprotected sex," she says.

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